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Office of Personnel
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

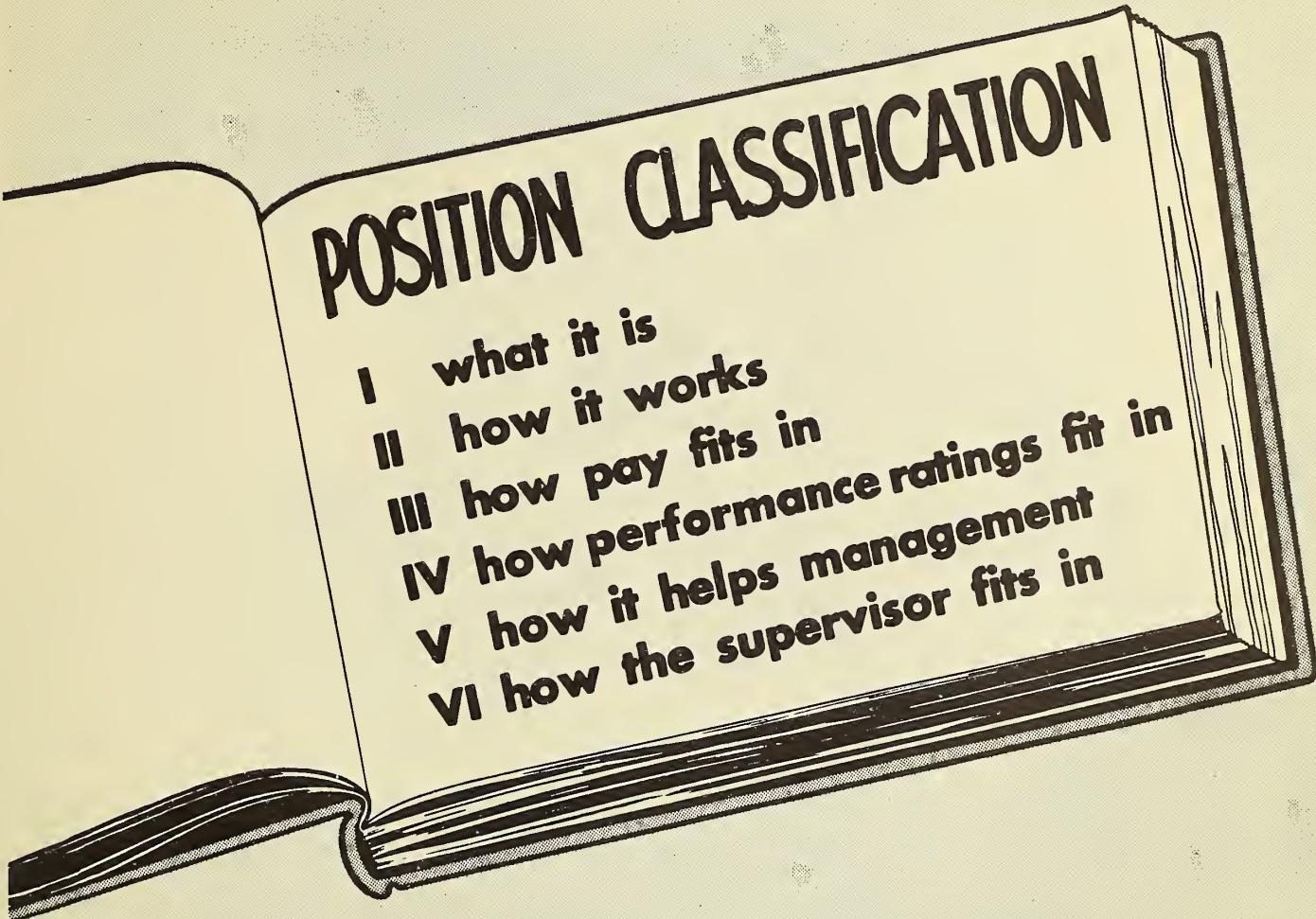
FOREWORD

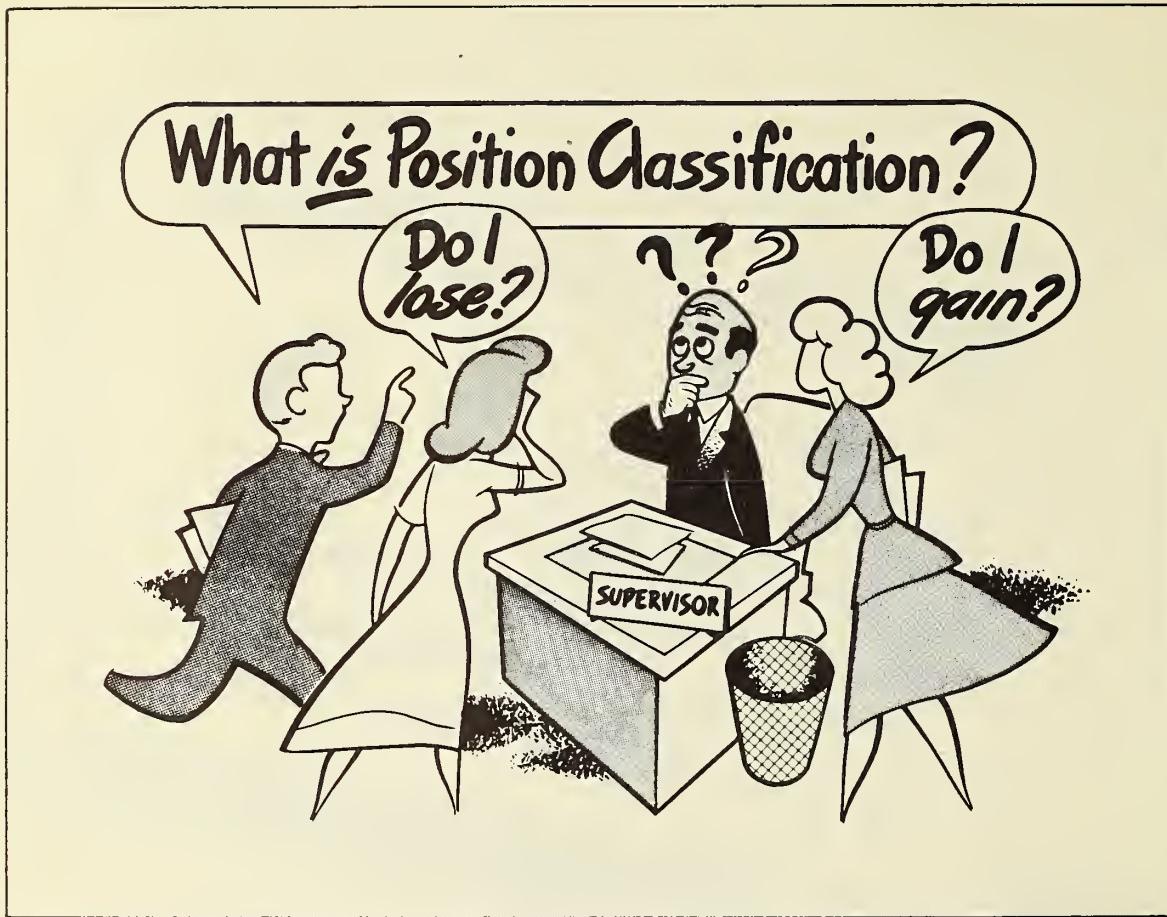
The pay you get as a USDA employee is one of the most important incentives you have for doing your job well.

But even more important for your morale is the fact that your pay compares fairly with the pay of other employees who do related work.

Most of us know that our pay is determined by a system of position classification. But the principles and operations of this classification system may not be so well known.

This pamphlet, "Classification in a Nutshell," has been designed to meet this need—to explain briefly how classification affects you and your job.





What does classification mean to you personally? Do you lose or gain by it? Who gets "automatic" pay increases and when? What is the relationship of performance ratings? How does the supervisor fit into the classification picture?

These are just a few of the questions frequently asked by employees about classification. Answers will be found on the following pages.

The basic principle of classification is very simple. If you'll look about, you'll find it widely used in everyday life.



LIKE items are placed in the SAME section

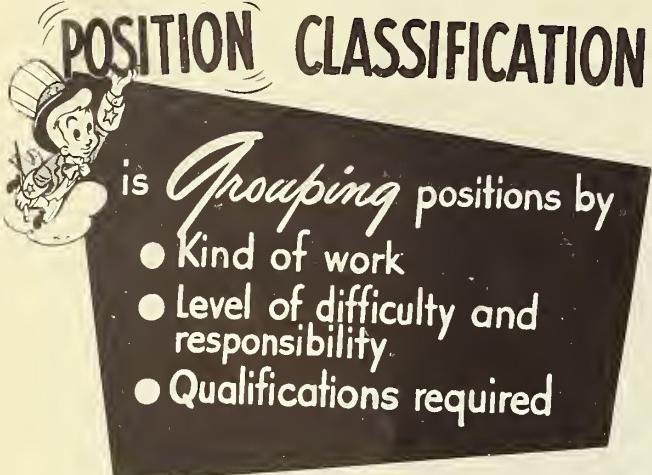
The arrangement and pricing of groceries in a store is a very effective method of classification.

It makes sense to arrange all bread in the same location—and all meat together. Canned foods, soap, juices, and other types of items are likewise arranged separately to put system and order into managing the store and serving its customers.

This organized arrangement makes it simple to put the proper value or price on all the items in one group, and it makes it easy for customers to find what they want. This, of course, is absolutely necessary to good store management.

Classification in a grocery store then is simply a method of grouping like items together to make the job of managing those items easier. Exactly the same principle applies in position classification.

POSITION CLASSIFICATION



is *Grouping* positions by

- Kind of work
- Level of difficulty and responsibility
- Qualifications required

Positions must be treated in an orderly way in the Federal service. There are many positions and they are of many different types and kinds. Thus a systematic arrangement of positions is needed, just as for items in the grocery store, library, or drug store.

The method of grouping is explained here. The three points shown form the basis for placing similar positions in the same group. They are important because they are the features of your job which determine the proper group or classification in which it belongs.

After your job has been thoroughly studied in terms of the three points mentioned, it is then classified by giving it a title and a grade. The grade really determines a certain range of pay rates which apply to your work.

Remember—grouping jobs by kind and level of work and qualifications required by the work, determines their title and pay range.

...which results in:

a uniform title and
range of pay rates
for each group.

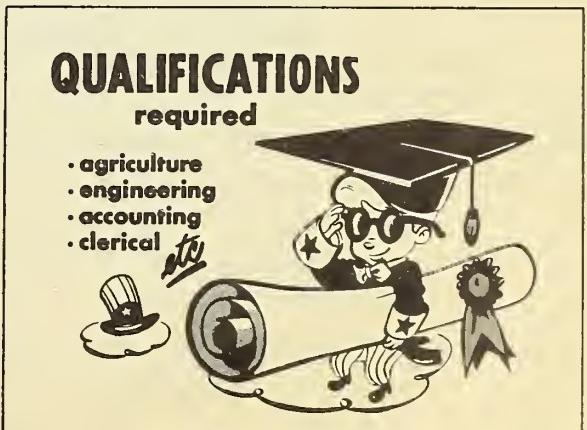
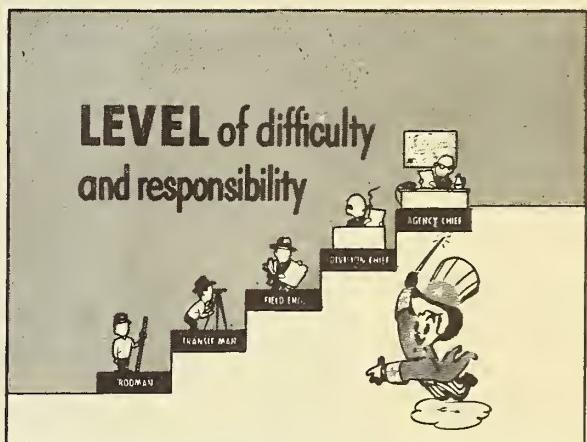
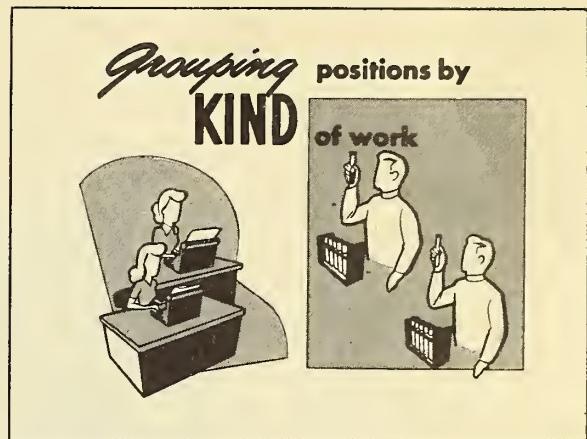


Examine more closely this arrangement by kind or type of work performed. Stenographers perform a different kind of work than statistical clerks; chemists' work differs considerably from that of economists. Since the work is not similar they do not naturally fall in the same group. But knowing the kind of work an employee does is essential to finding a title for his position. This is only the first step in classifying a job, because jobs differ not only as to kind of work, but in responsibility as well. We thus need to make a further grouping to get at the proper level of one stenographer's duties, for example, in relation to the level of work done by another stenographer.

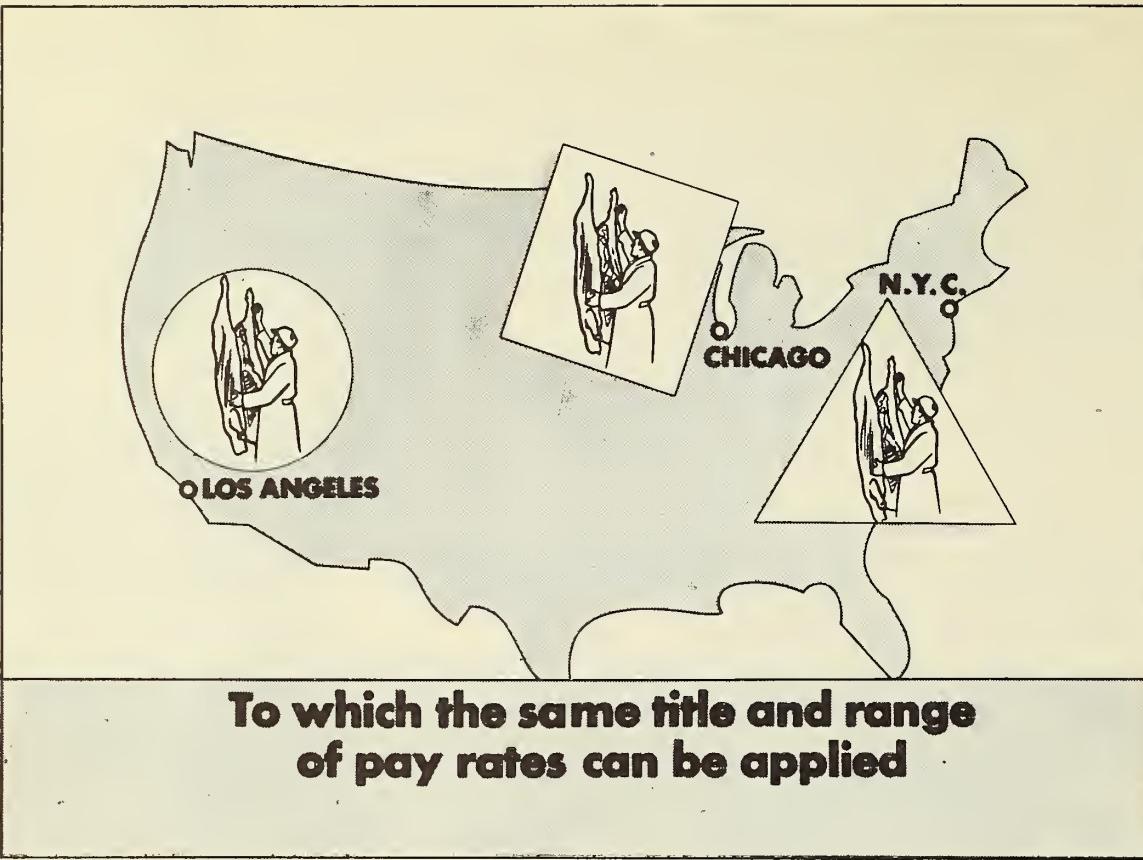
In general, work ranges from routine to responsible. Using the obvious extremes here of the rodman and the engineering bureau chief, you can see at a glance the meaning of different levels of responsibility.

It is necessary then to identify differences in level after establishing the kind of work. This gives uniform treatment in arranging positions according to similar levels of responsibility.

The third feature of grouping to be considered is that of qualifications required to do the work. These are qualifications required by the job itself, not those which you might happen to have. They tell something about the type of work and the level of work. They are essential to the other steps in the process because positions which are similar in kind and level of work require similar skills and abilities to do the work.



- agriculture
- engineering
- accounting
- clerical
- etc.



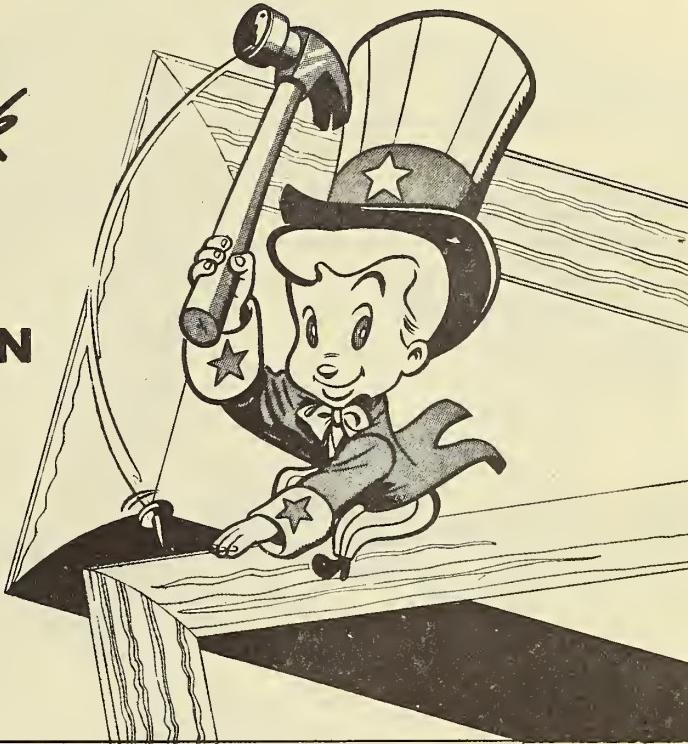
When the grouping is finished all positions which are the same in kind of work, level of work, and qualifications required are in the same group and each position therein is given the same title, grade, and range of pay. Where the positions are located does not make any difference. There is equal pay for the same work. This is the key to the whole system.

Remember then, that classification is grouping positions according to—

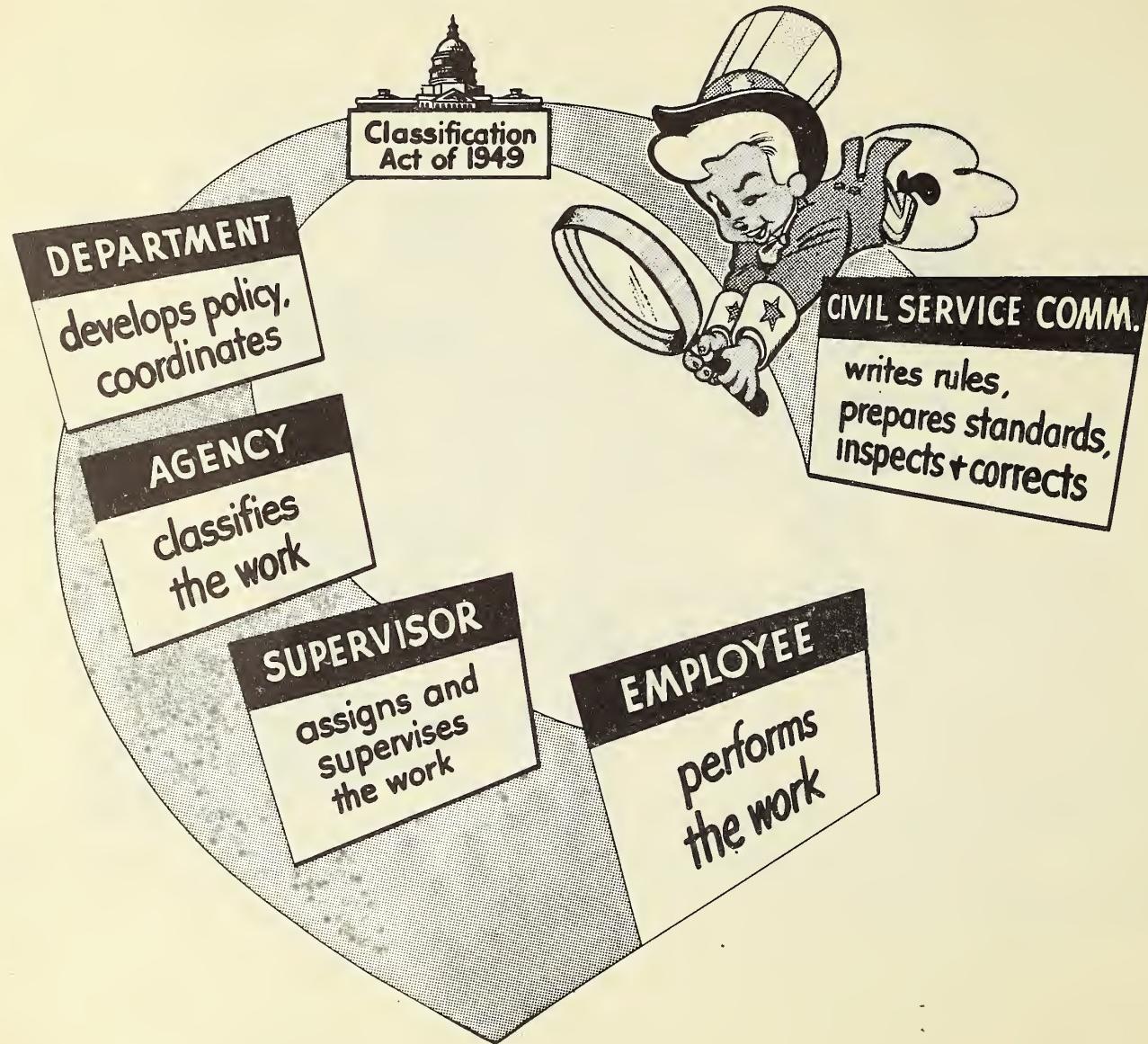
1. Kind of work
2. Level of difficulty and responsibility
3. Qualifications required

These three things determine pay—pay does not determine them.

**what is the
framework
for
POSITION
CLASSIFICATION
?**



Let's look briefly at the background for position classification—what its framework is—who uses it—who is responsible for it—how it all fits together within the framework.



Congress established the present classification plan by passing the Classification Act of 1949. This act tells how the plan is to operate and who is responsible for making it work. It describes broad standards for use in measuring jobs and tells how the standards are to be used.

The Department Office of Personnel acts for the Secretary of Agriculture in coordinating the classification policies and activities throughout the whole Department. This is very important because coordination is necessary to assure equal pay for equal work among agencies of the Department.

Each agency or bureau personnel office in the Department is responsible for making studies of work assignments in the agency and applying the proper standard to arrive at the correct classification. The agency classifies the work.

The supervisor decides and assigns tasks or duties to employees. All the assignments to one employee constitute a job or position. And the employee is responsible for carrying out the duties of the job efficiently.

The Civil Service Commission generally coordinates classification for the entire Government. This is done mostly by periodically inspecting work assignments to check them against classification grades on positions in the agency. The Commission also is responsible for writing rules and regulations to be followed by the agencies and for preparing detailed standards to be used by people who classify individual jobs.

How does the
SYSTEM WORK ?



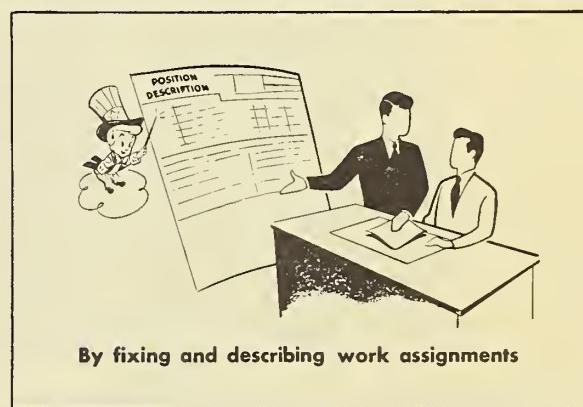
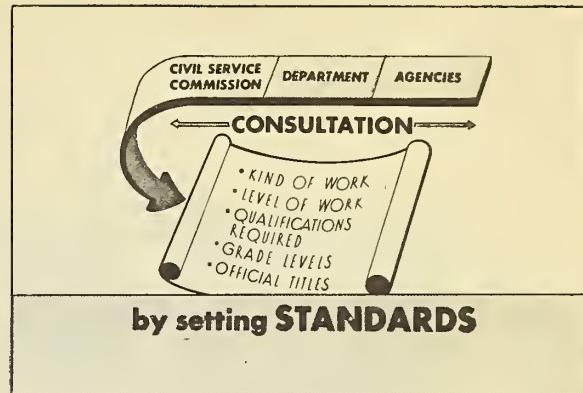
Three main parts are involved in operating the system. The first is setting standards. Without standards jobs cannot be measured with any degree of consistency. So a "blueprint" is prepared setting forth the different points which must be considered in measuring a particular type of job. It explains in detail the kind of work, the different levels of work, the qualifications required for each level, and the grade level of each position with the official title. Because the standard is so important to the classification process, it is developed through joint consultation by the Civil Service Commission, the Department, and the various bureaus and agencies of the Department.

After the standard comes the second part of the operation—fixing and describing the work assignment. Note the emphasis on work assignment. The job description is chiefly a device for recording the work assignment. The work assignment itself is the really important thing to be measured. Once the work assignment has been fixed, it is compared with or measured against the standard to find its proper grade and title.

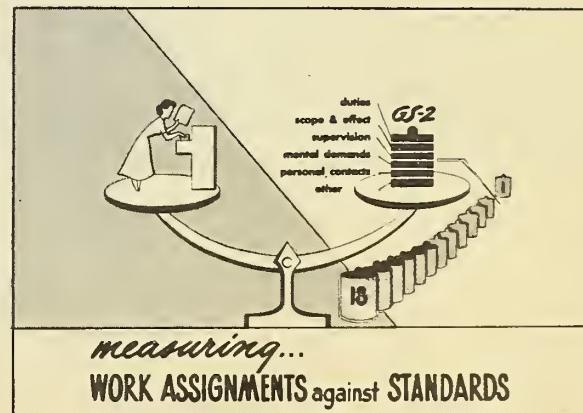
Weighing or balancing the assignment against the proper standard is the third important step.

Broad standards for measuring jobs were referred to in the preceding pages. Now let's look at the detailed make-up of a particular standard. It contains the duties of a typical position, the responsibilities involved, scope of the job, supervisory controls affecting the work, mental demands required, personal contacts made, and any other similar features which influence its title and grade.

So, up to this point we have looked at what position classification is and how it works. Now let's turn to pay.



By fixing and describing work assignments



How does PAY fit in?



First look at the pay schedules which Congress set up in the Classification Act of 1949. There are two and they are commonly referred to as GS and CPC. These symbols means "General Schedule" and "Crafts, Protective and Custodial." Each schedule has a series of grades and each grade has a series of salary steps. The bottom and top rates are shown here but not the steps in between. You can see that once a grade level is determined for a job by measuring duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements against standards, pay automatically follows from these schedules. But Congress didn't stop at setting up bottom and top rates in the pay schedules. They are only one part of a broad pay plan which also contains four other important features.

PAY SCHEDULES

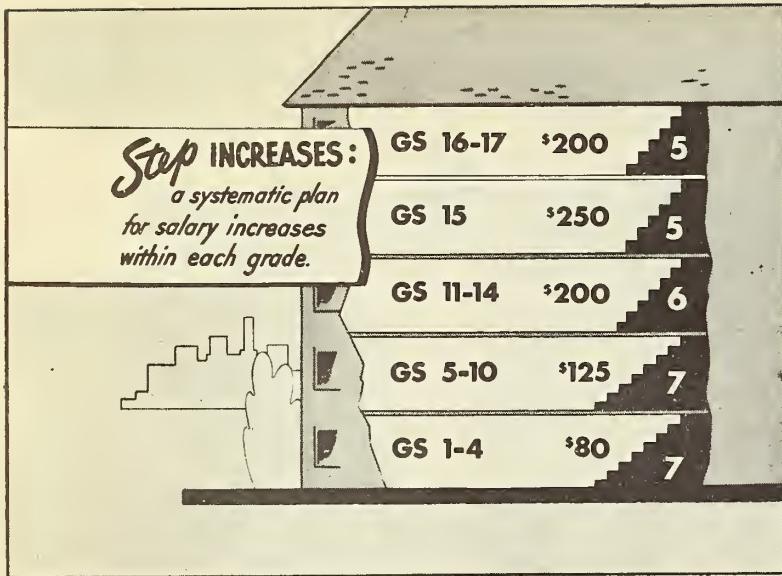
GS

GRADE	LOW	HIGH
1	2200	2680
2	2450	2930
3	2650	3130
4	2875	3355
5	3100	3850
6	3450	4200
7	3825	4575
8	4200	4950
9	4600	5350
10	5000	5750
11	5400	6400
12	6400	7400
13	7600	8600
14	8800	9800
15	10000	11000
16	11200	12000
17	12200	13000
18	14000	14000

CPC

GRADE	LOW	HIGH
1	1510	1870
2	2120	2540
3	2252	2732
4	2450	2930
5	2674	3154
6	2900	3380
7	3125	3725
8	3400	4150
9	3775	4525
10	4150	4900

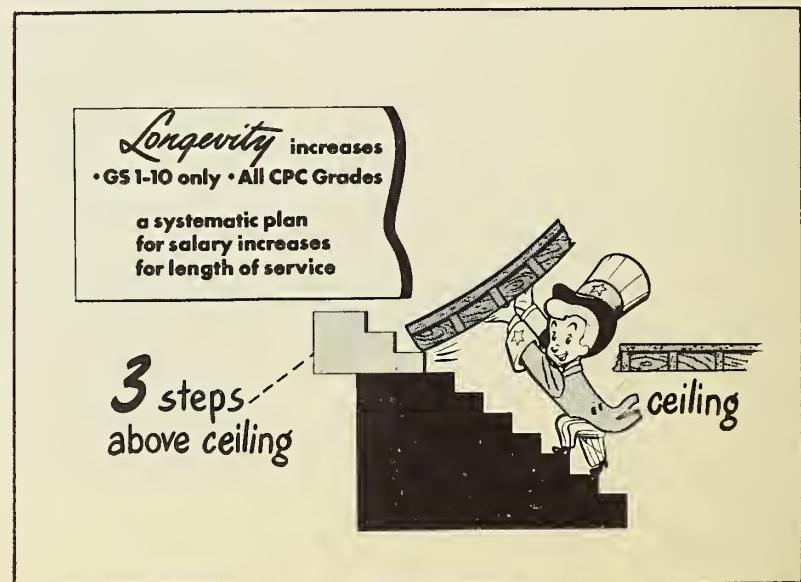




The first of these is "step increases." The main purpose of step rates is to pay you for how well you do your job—not what the job is. That's been taken care of already.

Note that the amount of the step varies by grade levels and the "waiting period" between step increases varies too. For example, if you're in a grade where the amount of increase is less than \$200, you can get an increase every 52 weeks if your performance on the job is satisfactory. For \$200 and \$250 steps, the time period is 78 weeks under the same conditions. The figures on the right of the picture show the number of step rates for particular grade levels.

In addition to the regular steps tied into how well you do your job, the pay part of classification is arranged to take care of people who occupy the same job for 10 years or more and have gone to the top of their grade. For each continuous 3 years of satisfactory performance in a grade in which you have reached the top pay rate, you can receive pay increases up to three steps above the ceiling. This type of salary increase was not possible prior to the passage of the Classification Act of 1949. In other words, the old ceiling of the top rate of the grade was "raised" when the system was changed in October 1949.



Plans for salary increases because of...

- 1 Superior Accomplishment**
- 2 Management Improvement**



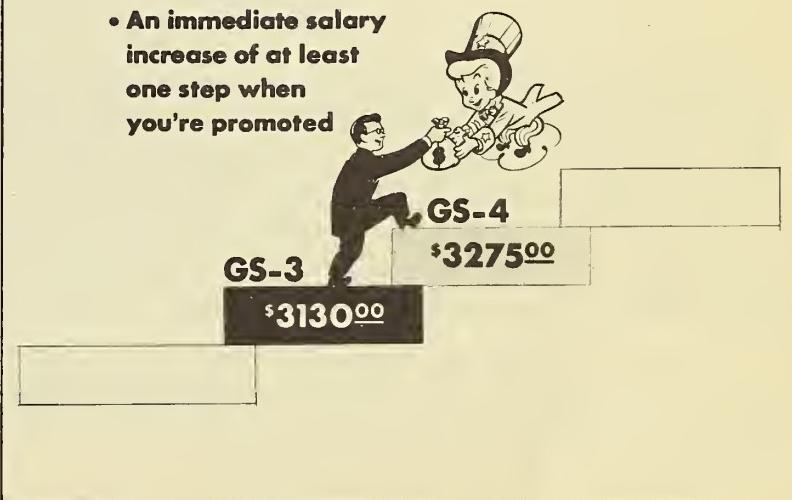
You are always assured of a higher salary when your grade is raised, by this feature of the pay plan. When you're reassigned from one job to another at a promotion in grade, you're entitled to the nearest rate in the higher grade which is at least equal to a one-step increase in your lower grade.

Thus, if you were promoted from GS-3 where your rate was \$3,130, to GS-4, your new pay rate would be \$3,275 under such an arrangement. Without this arrangement the new rate would have been \$3,195, which as you can see, is somewhat less than you are now entitled to receive.

Where you have accomplished something more than is normally expected in your job, your supervisor may recommend you for a superior accomplishment pay increase if you haven't reached the top of your grade. This is in addition to your regular periodic increase but is limited to one for each waiting period.

Management improvement increases are in lieu of superior accomplishment increases. They apply to both individual and group accomplishment but a showing of definite savings to the Government is required to get one of them. As many as three pay steps can be given for individual or group effort which has resulted in definite economy of operations.

- An immediate salary increase of at least one step when you're promoted



Does your performance rating affect your pay?



Yes!



STEP INCREASES

Knowing what you now do about the way the pay plan works you can probably answer the question shown here—yet it is not always easy for people to see the true relationship between performance and grade and pay.

When you're an efficient employee you feel you should be paid more than an inefficient co-worker—you're right! The pay plan is especially designed in step rates for the purpose of recognizing satisfactory performance,

But . . .

People often think that a high performance rating is the basis for changing the grade of a job even though the job remains the same. Actually your efficiency in performing your job has little to do with the grade of your job. Remember—what you do—the kind of work—the responsibility you have, and the qualifications necessary to do the job determine the grade. How well you do your job affects only your pay.

Try to keep the important distinction shown on this page in mind and it will help you to understand the difference between the operation of the pay plan, on the one hand—and the operation of the job evaluation plan, on the other.

Does your performance rating affect your classification?



No!



CLASSIFICATION

won't cure all your problems

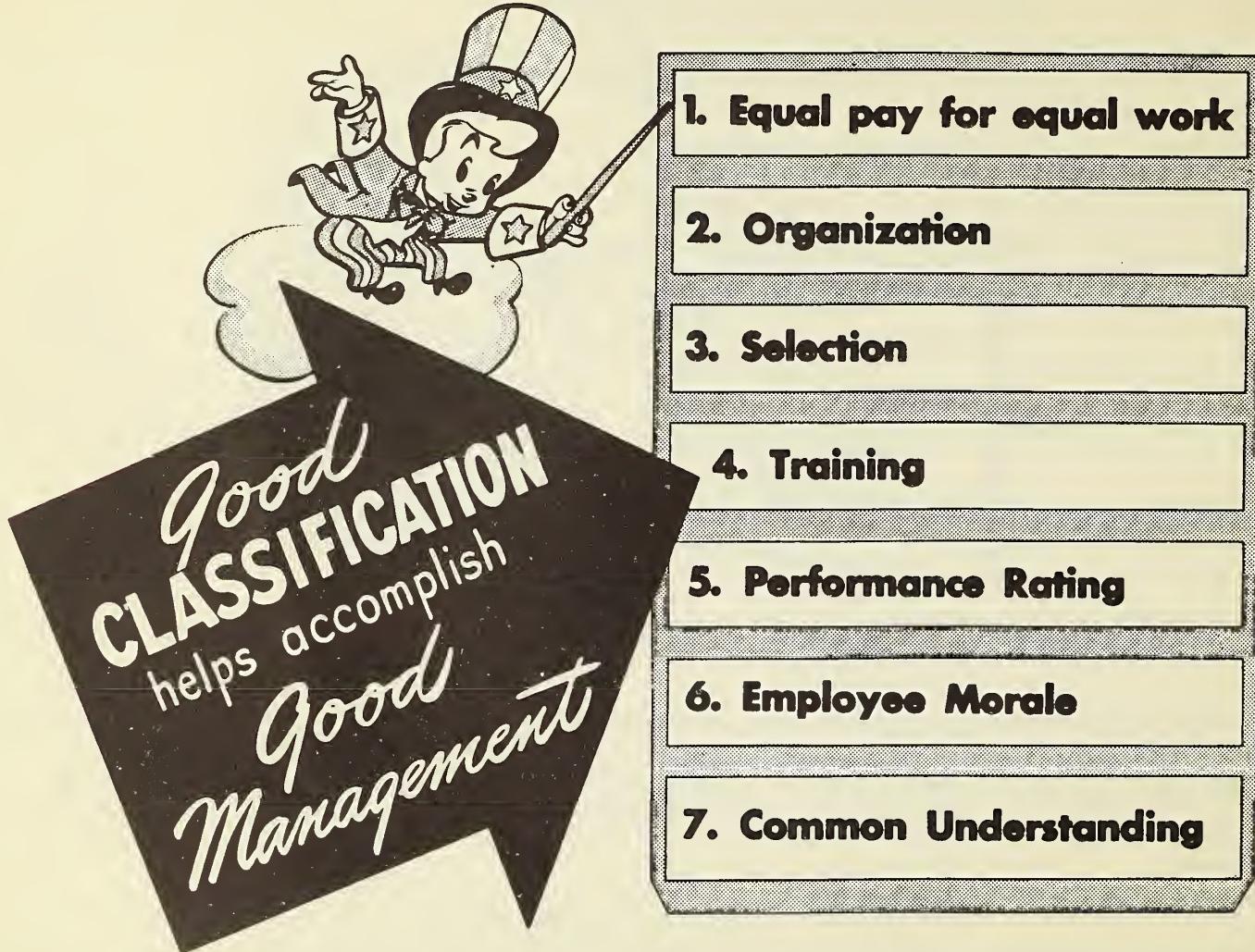


Here is another fairly common misconception about classification. While proper use of the classification system is a valuable tool of management it is not intended to be used as a cure-all.

Problems of bad organization, poor supervision, inefficient performance, inadequate training, misassignment of personnel and similar things cannot be cured by distorting the real objective of classification. Each problem must be solved by using the right management method.

If work is badly organized in the first place, no amount of effort through classification alone will make it well organized. If employees need better procedures or closer supervision on tough assignments, classification won't help much by itself. Misassignments are the result of poor work planning, not classification.

But classification, if understood and applied properly, can help a supervisor and his people in many ways.



- 1. Equal pay for equal work**
- 2. Organization**
- 3. Selection**
- 4. Training**
- 5. Performance Rating**
- 6. Employee Morale**
- 7. Common Understanding**

1. Employees paid equally for the same work are satisfied employees, willing to carry their share of the total job. That is the meaning of equal pay for equal work and is the primary objective of the classification system.
2. Good organization means good planning, and the systematic arrangement of work among the jobs and people on your staff. Let's call it orderly arrangement of work assignments.
3. The selection of the right person for the right job depends on knowing what the job is and what it requires in skills and abilities. A good description outlining these points is basic to proper employee selection.
4. Performance ratings rest entirely on what work is done and how well it is done.
5. Training needs are met by analysis of jobs or work assignments that are clearly defined.
6. Common understanding among employees and between them and their supervisors on what is to be done is a natural result of accurately defining work assignments.
7. —And last, but not least—few influences disturb the morale of employees more than pay differences that do not reflect real differences in responsibilities and performance.

Mr. Supervisor . . .



*You decide
within the framework of agency policy.*

WHAT

WHO

WHEN

WHICH

HOW

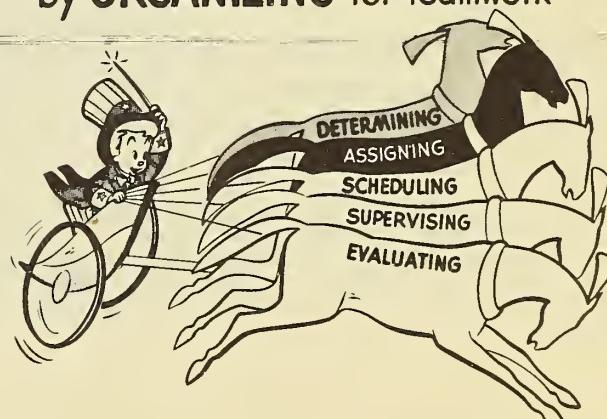


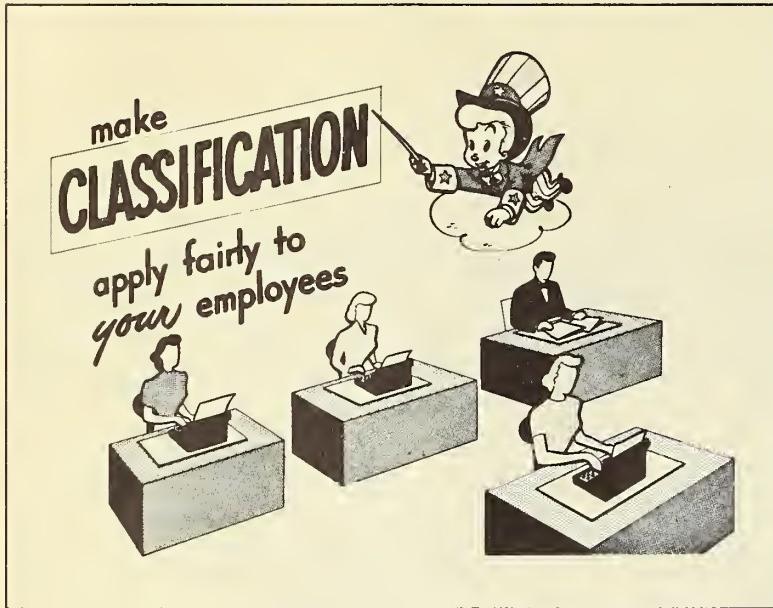
- to do
- should do it
- to do it
- method to use
- good it is

Any supervisor must *plan* his work to get a good job done. During his planning he must make decisions that usually involve the elements shown here. Each one of them affects the work to be done and the people who will do it. Each one has a counterpart in the picture below in bringing *action* to the plan of work.

After decisions have been made in the work plan, the supervisor is ready to organize the work and his staff to get the job done quickly and efficiently. His action from start to finish can be summed up in determining what's to be done, assigning people to do it, scheduling the work to complete it on time, supervising the work while it's being done, and evaluating the results when it's finished. Note this—Every one of these things has an important influence on both the pay and job evaluation features of classification.

by ORGANIZING for teamwork

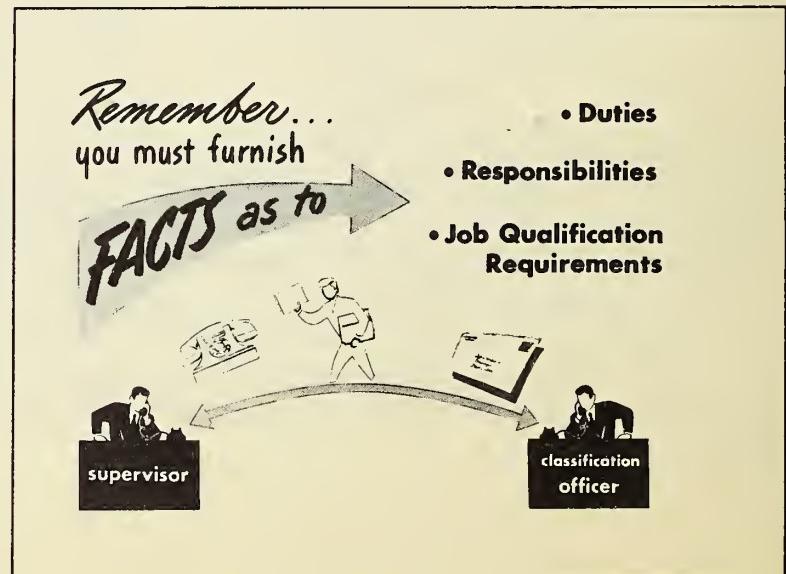




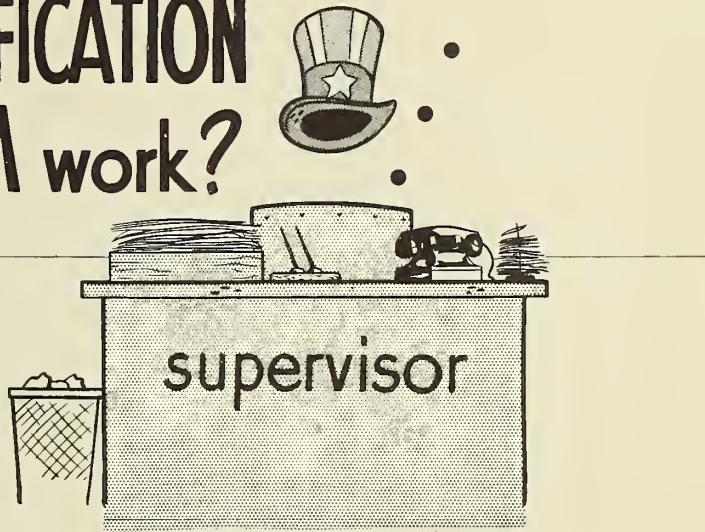
When work is carefully planned and carried out through well-organized action, classification is bound to apply fairly and equitably among employees. If you are a supervisor you can give classification a real opportunity to contribute to the effectiveness of your employees and what they do, simply by careful everyday work planning and supervision.

Here is another important role for supervisors to consider. Classification is only as effective as the facts on which it rests. You and your employees know these facts about your jobs better than anyone else!

Unless you furnish accurate information about the work assignments of your people to your classification or administrative officer, classification will not work properly for you or your organization.



what are *you*
doing to make the
CLASSIFICATION
SYSTEM work?



Finally—The classification system won't work right without your help. Use it the way it was intended. Consider its effects in planning and organizing your work. Consider its effects upon your employees. Get the most out of it. See that classification makes a contribution to better management and personnel administration in the public service.

